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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000113

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TT](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT RAMOS-HORTA RETURNS TO TIMOR-LESTE

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CLASSIFIED BY: Henry M. Rector, Charge d'affaires, U.S. Embassy  
Dili, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Two months after being severely injured in an assassination attempt, Timor-Leste President Ramos-Horta received a warm welcome upon his return to Dili on April 17, with crowds lining the route of his motorcade. He gave a brief address to Parliament in which he repeated his call for the surviving leader of the February 11 attackers to turn himself in, and urged the GOTL to formulate a plan to reduce the impact of rising commodity costs on Timor-Leste's poor. A source close to Ramos-Horta said that the President's advisors persuaded him to delay giving a longer, possibly more contentious speech to Parliament until Monday, April 21, and that Ramos-Horta would revise it as necessary once he had assessed the mood in the capital over the coming days. Observers will be watching the President's conduct closely for substantiation of reports that Ramos-Horta's attitude towards the opposition FRETILIN party has warmed during his recovery, while his relationship with Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao has deteriorated. End Summary.

WARM WELCOME HOME

¶2. (U) After two months of recovery in Darwin, Australia from his February 11 shooting, President Jose Ramos-Horta returned to Dili on the morning of April 17. He was met at the airport by the entire Cabinet, leaders of political parties, the diplomatic corps, and a large crowd. In remarks to the press at the airport, he previewed the themes of his speech to Parliament (see paras 5 - 7 below). Dismissing one of the innumerable accounts of the February 11 attacks that are circulating in Dili, he denied that he had invited the assassins to his house for a meeting, and said that the shooting of their leader, Major Alfredo Reinado, was a justifiable reaction on the part of the security guards at the Presidential compound.

¶3. (U) Throngs lined the route as the President's car made its way into town. A visibly emotional Ramos-Horta stopped occasionally to wade into the crowd. Security for Ramos-Horta's convoy was provided by National Police and Portuguese Republican

National Guard, while the International Stabilization Force (ISF) secured the route. As the small motorcade proceeded slowly, flag-waving Timorese fell in behind it, forming a parade.

¶4. (U) While the warmth of the welcome was heartfelt, the turnout was not completely spontaneous. The government and schools closed for the day, and government workers were ordered to attend the parade and carry banners. Ministries and offices were even given numerical quotas of participants to be provided for the welcome-home festivities.

#### RAMOS-HORTA ADDRESSES PARLIAMENT

¶5. (U) In a brief address to Parliament at 10:00 a.m., Ramos-Horta thanked Fernando "Lasama" de Araujo for his service as Acting President; Lasama will now resume his previous duties as President of Parliament. He thanked the political parties and people of Timor-Leste for their support during his convalescence. He also thanked the ISF and the Aspen Clinic for treating him and transporting him to Australia on February 11.

¶6. (U) Ramos-Horta said that the impact of rising commodity prices on Timor-Leste's poor was his highest priority at the moment, and he urged the GOTL and National Parliament to make funding available to address this problem even if it meant dipping into the Petroleum Trust Fund. Ramos-Horta announced that he would speak to Parliament again at greater length on Monday.

¶7. (U) Ramos-Horta then reiterated his appeal to Lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, leader of the surviving February 11 attackers, to turn himself in to the Prosecutor General, with the Church as an intermediary if necessary. He said that it was important that Salsinha turn himself in alive so that he could tell a court of law who was behind the shootings, who sent the attackers to Dili, and who might still be seeking to destabilize Timor-Leste. Ramos-Horta appeared to be fighting back tears as

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he recalled his efforts to hold a dialogue with Major Alfredo Reinado, the leader of the February 11 attackers.

#### DAYS AHEAD

¶8. (C) Ramos-Horta has no fixed plans for the next few days, except for a small dinner he will host on April 19 for Prince Albert of Monaco. On Monday, April 21, the President's staff will relocate from its current office in the Palacio des Cinzas to a newly-renovated facility in Farol, on Dili's waterfront. According to Atul Khare, Head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), Ramos-Horta may travel to Europe in 2 - 3 weeks' time to meet with the Pope. (Note: Ramos-Horta has publicly invoked religious themes at several points during his recovery. He sported a t-shirt emblazoned with a portrait of Jesus in one appearance, and implied in an interview that he survived the attack as a result of divine intervention. "Welcome Back" T-shirts distributed for today's events featured an image of Ramos-Horta with the Pope.)

#### REALIGNMENT IN THE WORKS?

¶9. (C) Most observers expect some kind of political realignment in the coming days and weeks, although the exact nature of these changes is the subject of rumor and speculation. During his recovery, Ramos-Horta has reportedly moved closer to the opposition FRETILIN party, due in part to the presence in Darwin of his ex-wife, FRETILIN heavyweight Ana Pessoa. There is a strong perception in Dili that his relations with Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao have chilled. A source on Ramos-Horta's staff told us today that Ramos-Horta may assign FRETILIN leaders advisory roles on security sector and public administration reform, and may endorse FRETILIN Secretary General Alkatiri's call for an independent investigation to the February 11 attacks.

¶10. (C) The same source told us that Ramos-Horta had originally planned to give a much longer speech before Parliament today,

but that advisors had persuaded him to put it aside and instead deliver it, possibly in a revised form, on Monday. According to the source, the Ramos-Horta's advisors deemed the contents of the first draft of this speech - which may have included a call for early parliamentary elections -- too disruptive, and wanted the President to reconsider after he had had time to gauge the mood of the country and relations among the various political players in Dili.

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